

# EMAC Secondary School Recommendations

We recommend the Board should immediately form a “Design Task Force” to pursue the findings of the EMAC Secondary Schools Subcommittee. The time is now.

**1** **Design Task Force (DTF):** Continue the work EMAC has started on the “why” by commissioning a Design Task Force (DTF) to come up with the “what’ and the “how” so that the Board can be ready to make a set of go / no-go decisions by Summer 2016.

- A. Use the DTF as inclusive vehicle to engage Palo Alto stakeholders – parents, teachers, students, administrators, citizens – on how best to improve our secondary schools . . . not only for the near-term, but to craft a strategic, deliberate, shared vision 10-15 years from now
- B. Ensure the DTF adheres to strict Board policy guidelines of “parity spend per student” throughout the District
- C. Narrow the scope of the DTF by providing Board input into the relative priorities the DTF should investigate – **see below**

**2** **Areas of focus for the DTF:** The EMAC Secondary Schools Subcommittee surfaced five (5) distinct areas of issues / concerns that deserve further investigation by the Board. EMAC recommends that all of these areas are worth investigating by the DTF . . . in a phased & modular way.

- A. **Our middle schools are too big** – Look into opening a new middle school that will bring enrollment within a normative band of 600-900 students per school. Recommend design element details including site location, school size, timetable, choice, phase-in approach, etc.
- B. **Our high schools are too big** – Investigate whether Paly and Gunn can actually hold 2300 students each, even after \$200M in recent capital improvements. Look into opening a new high school that will bring enrollment within a normative band of 1200-1700 students per school. Recommend design element details including site location, school size, timetable, choice, etc. Investigate private funding sources.
- C. **Our schools need to offer new learning pathways** – Look into how the District can innovate and lead in providing the best 21<sup>st</sup> century education for our secondary school students (e.g., curriculum that is experience-based, team- and inquiry-oriented, cross-disciplinary). Recommend actionable plans on how innovation can become quicker and more pervasive throughout our current secondary schools and across the District. Get assistance from Stanford’s School of Education and d.school.
- D. **Our students crave more teacher + student engagement** – Look into how to make our secondary schools feel more personal & accessible and improve connectedness. Recommend actionable plans for scaling up existing pathways and creating new small learning communities such as “core teams” or “house system” more systematically and robustly than exists today.
- E. **Our agreement with the City specifies we work on Cubberley together, and soon** – Look into how to develop a joint Master Plan for Cubberley site redevelopment. Work closely with City of Palo Alto staff.